

Henry Hurd Rusby

With the passing of Dr. Rusby, at the age of eighty-five, on November 18, 1940, the Torrey Botanical Club loses its oldest member. It was in 1879 that the distinguished plant collector and pharmacognocist became a corresponding member of the Club. At the time of his death he was an honorary life member. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Margaret Hanna Rusby, three daughters, two brothers and a sister.

Educated in the rural districts, botany became an interest early in life. In 1876 he won the prize for the best herbarium at the Philadelphia Centennial. The plants were collected from his own beloved New Jersey and were well within the range of the Torrey Club. Though educated as a physician he did not practice medicine but early turned to teaching and became a professor of botany and materia medica and later was dean of the Columbia University College of Pharmacy until his retirement in 1930. During part of this time he also taught at the New York University School of Medicine and at the New York Veterinary College.

He conducted five botanical explorations to South and Central America in search of economic plants, many of which were new to science. He carried on extensive surveys in the study of the Cinchonas. It is estimated that he collected 45,000 specimens during his life time. Most of the type specimens are deposited in the herbarium of the New York Botanical Garden.

Dr. Rusby was president of the Torrey Botanical Club for several years. It was but natural that Dr. Rusby should early in life come in contact with Dr. N. L. Britton and together they were very active in the establishment of the New York Botanical Garden. For many years he was chairman of the Board of Managers and Honorary Curator of the Economic Collections.

The study of plants led to food and drug investigations that lasted throughout Dr. Rusby's entire life. Working with Dr. Wiley they were the real instigators in the passage of the first Food and Drugs Act. After the passage of the Act Dr. Rusby served for some time as pharmacognocist for the Port of New York and as such established an effective control over nearly all the imports into this country.

The list of publications, which included books, travels, and taxonomic descriptions, is long and cannot be included in this short tabulation. He was the recipient of many honors throughout his long and active life. He was Hanbury Medallist in 1929, a unique honor bestowed by the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, and one of his choice possessions.

For fifty years Dr. Rusby exerted a profound influence upon pharmaceutical education in this country. He was a dominant character and if the principle of the subject was right he was an untiring fighter. Students benefited from his influence, although it must be confessed that at times he strayed from his subject and ventured into the fields of intellectual philosophy, "for the good of the cause," as he aptly expressed it.

Very few people in the Torrey Botanical Club ever had the privilege of collecting with Rusby. The writer was fortunate enough to enjoy many days in New Jersey when Rusby was nearing the seventies. Rests were frequent and those half hours spent in the shade of a tree were moments when one could really get close to Dr. Rusby. These trips were in the nature of "escapes" from a routine that administrative work demanded. It was regrettable that time did not permit him to write a text on the flower behavior of the plants in this area. His information was gained through actual observation in the field and his knowledge on this subject was vastly superior to that which has appeared in textbooks to date. Though practically his entire life was spent in undergraduate teaching it has always seemed a pity that some far-sighted administrative head did not pick Dr. Rusby and put him in with graduate contacts in the fields of cytology and genetics where without doubt he would have anticipated many of the discoveries that have occurred in the last two decades.

WM. J. BONISTEEL

ALGINIC ACID has long been known but it is only in recent years that the production of sodium alginate has assumed commercial importance. Sodium alginate enters into the production of ceramics, plastics, and as a binder in the paper industry. It is used as an emulsifier, in the treatment of waste waters and is an important constituent of cosmetic preparations.